

# Surviving holiday dinner

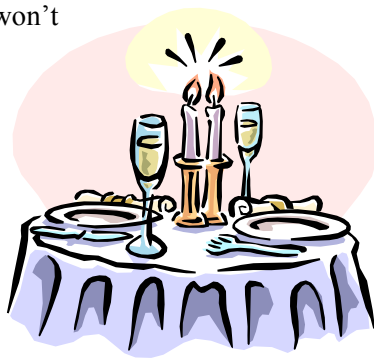
## Catering to vegetarians and meat eaters at the same meal

### Catering to vegetarians

There are ways to make everyone feel comfortable and well-fed when you are planning a festive meal for your vegetarian and non-vegetarian guests.

#### Options:

- ◆ Consider not serving turkey and cater the whole meal vegetarian. Creative use of recipes flavoured with delicious herbs and spices won't leave anyone feeling deprived.
- ◆ If you are serving the traditional turkey and all the fixings, add a special vegetarian entrée and meat-free gravy (see recipes below).
- ◆ Focus on providing a wide variety of delicious side dishes. Holiday favourites that are vegetarian include: baked squash, roasted vegetables, wild rice, baked potatoes, cranberry sauce, etc.
- ◆ Make all the appetizers vegetarian. Try hummus, vegetarian pate, olive paste, guacamole, or bruschetta.
- ◆ Your vegetarian guests may offer to bring their own entrée. Letting them bring something may put both you and them at ease.



#### Other things to consider:

- ◆ The vegetarians won't eat the stuffing if it is cooked in the turkey. You may wish to prepare a special batch of stuffing and bake it in a separate dish.
- ◆ Try and find out if your veggie guests will eat dairy products and/or eggs. If you are unsure, don't include any dairy or eggs in the food you prepare for them.

### Being invited to a non-vegetarian's home

- ◆ If your hosts are relatives or good friends who know you are vegetarian, ask them if they want you to bring along an entrée to share with the rest of the guests.
- ◆ If you don't know your hosts all that well, try and make sure they know you are vegetarian or vegan. Their reaction should give you some clue as to how to proceed from there, e.g. they will cheerfully cater a separate dish for you or they are totally at a loss and would therefore welcome you contributing an entrée to the meal.

### Inviting non-vegetarians to your home

Prepare a substantial vegetarian meal – well cooked and attractively served. Don't apologize for the lack of a turkey. There is no need to call attention to the idea that something is missing.

### Time saving tips

- ◆ Call a vegetarian-friendly restaurant\* and order an entrée or side dish that you can pick up. Bring your own containers. Le Commensal (several locations in Quebec and one in Toronto) has an excellent selection in their buffet. They also carry prepackaged savoury pies, patés, fancy desserts, etc.
- ◆ Larger natural food stores\* carry Tofurkey ("a bird-free feast with all the trimmings") and a wide variety of vegetarian dips, patés, faux meats, frozen entrees, non-dairy ice cream, pies, soy nog (in December) and more.
- ◆ Arrange for some or all of the guests to contribute a dish.
- ◆ At some point after the meal ask for help with the dishes and clean-up. Many hands make light work.
- ◆ Prepare some of the items ahead of time. Use easy recipes that you are already familiar with.

\* See [www.veg.ca/directory](http://www.veg.ca/directory) for listings.

### Easy Festive Bake

1 large block tofu (300 g) OR 1 (10 1/2 oz) package firm silken tofu  
3/4 cup chopped nuts (walnuts, cashews)  
2 Tbsp cornstarch mixed with 4 Tbsp water  
1 Tbsp soy sauce  
1 packet dried onion soup mix (1.5 oz)  
1 1/2 cups chopped onion  
1/2 cup chopped celery  
2 cups chopped mushrooms or 2 cans mushrooms drained  
1 tsp oil

1 tsp each oregano, ground cumin, sage, black pepper  
1 1/2 cups bread crumbs

In a blender (or food processor) blend until smooth tofu, nuts, cornstarch, soy sauce, and onion soup mix.

In a frying pan sauté vegetables until onions are transparent. Stir in herbs and spices.

In a large bowl, thoroughly mix

blender ingredients, cooked vegetables & bread crumbs together.

Press into a greased loaf pan. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes. Let cool slightly. Turn loaf out and slice.

Serve with vegetarian gravy. Also delicious cold with salad or as a sandwich filling.

## Stuffed Tofu Turkey

5 (10 oz) large blocks of tofu	1 Tbsp celery seed
1 cup diced onions	6 Tbsp dried herbs (mix of sage, savory, rosemary, thyme)
4 cloves minced garlic	1 tsp black pepper
1 1/2 cups diced mushrooms	2 cups soft bread crumbs
1 1/2 cups diced celery	One cloth (cheesecloth or clean dish cloth)
1/4 cup sesame oil	
1/2 cup soy sauce	
1/2 cup fresh minced parsley	
1 Tbsp garlic powder	

Line a 12-inch colander with a large piece of clean, damp cloth. Crumble the tofu well, then pack it into the colander. Cover tofu with overlapping cloth, and place a dessert plate on top, then put a heavy object on the plate and let it rest for about 1 hour.

## Good Gravy

1/4 cup whole wheat flour	5 tsp dried herbs (mix of basil, sage, marjoram, rosemary)
1 Tbsp tahini	Black pepper to taste
1/4 cup tamari or soy sauce	
2-3 cups vegetable stock or water	

Toast flour in a saucepan until lightly browned. Slowly mix in tahini, then add tamari. Slowly add water or stock, beating or whisking to form a smooth paste. Add the herbs and let simmer for several minutes. Add more stock if too thick.

## Sweet Potato and Parsnip Casserole

*Serves 8. Halve the quantities for a smaller number of people.*

3 large onions, thinly sliced	2-3 cups vegetable stock
1 tsp olive oil for frying	1 tsp dried thyme
3-4 large sweet potatoes peeled and cut into small chunks	Salt and black pepper to taste
4-5 parsnips, peeled and cut into 1/4 inch slices	1/4 cup whole wheat breadcrumbs (or crumbled toast)
	1 tsp olive oil

In a large frying pan, sauté onions in oil until a deep golden brown. Add the sweet potatoes and parsnips, vegetable stock, thyme and a little salt and pepper (you may need less salt if you made the stock from commercial vegetable cubes). Simmer until the sweet potatoes are tender and most of the liquid is absorbed, 15 – 30 minutes. Place mixture in a casserole dish. At this stage, you can refrigerate the dish until ready to cook. Preheat oven to 400°F, mix the breadcrumbs with 1 tsp oil and sprinkle on the top. Bake the casserole for 20-30 minutes or until stock has been absorbed by the potatoes and the top is brown and crusty.

## Vegan Egg Nog

2 blocks of very soft tofu OR 2 (10 1/2 oz) packages of soft silken tofu	1/4 cup sugar
2 cups soy milk or rice milk	2 Tbsp brown sugar
4 tsp vanilla extract	1/4 tsp ground turmeric
	1/2 - 1 cup rum or brandy (optional)
	Nutmeg

Thoroughly combine all ingredients (except nutmeg) in a blender and serve, sprinkling each serving with nutmeg.

*Recommended cookbooks available from TVA:  
Vegetarian Tastes of Toronto & Friendly Foods*

Meanwhile, make the stuffing. Sauté onions, garlic, celery and mushrooms in 1 Tbsp sesame oil for one minute then add the herbs and half the soy sauce, cover, and cook 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add bread crumbs and mix well.

Remove weight and plate from tofu. Scoop out tofu with a large spoon leaving 1 inch thickness around the sides of the colander. Press the stuffing into the hollow and cover it with the remaining tofu. Press down firmly, then place an oiled baking sheet on top and turn the whole thing over, leaving the “turkey” with the flat side face down on the baking sheet. Combine the remaining soy sauce and sesame oil and brush it over the “turkey”. Cover with foil or a metal bowl and bake for one hour at 400°F. Transfer to a serving plate, baste with any remaining liquid and serve with gravy and cranberry sauce.

## Chestnut Soup with Greens

*Serves: 8*

2 cups onion, finely diced	1 bunch watercress, washed, stems removed
1 pound chestnuts, peeled and ground in food processor, OR 15 1/2 oz. Unsweetened chestnut purée	2 cups of dark greens (dandelion, rapini, arugula, or other greens)
6 cups water	1 bunch scallions (green part only), sliced
Salt to taste	

Combine onions, chestnut purée and water in a very large pot. Simmer 15 minutes; add salt. Just before serving, add greens and scallions; cook briefly until wilted.

## Ginger Cranberry Mincemeat Pie

*Pastry:*

Line a pie dish with your favourite pastry recipe (try adding 1/4 tsp cinnamon to the flour). Keep aside any leftovers or trimmings. Or buy a ready-made pastry shell from the supermarket (read the ingredients, some contain lard)

*Filling:*

2 cups fresh cranberries OR a large can with the juice drained off
Large jar of vegetarian mincemeat (most supermarkets now sell a vegetarian brand, read the ingredients. If you like, add a spoonful of brandy a few hours before you use it.)
1 level Tbsp ground ginger
2 Tbsp raw cane sugar (try Sucanat)
2 Tbsp water

Put the cranberries in a pan with the sugar and water and cook until softened (if using canned, just heat them through). Cool. Mix in the mincemeat and ginger and pour into the pastry shell.

Take the pastry trimmings, or the top piece of a store-bought pastry shell, and cut into star or other shapes and arrange round the edge of the filling. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes or until pastry is golden then sprinkle the pastry shapes with a little cane sugar. Eat warm, or pop in the oven to warm up later.

## Toronto Vegetarian Association

[www.veg.ca](http://www.veg.ca) 416-544-9800

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